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## **Sen. Hardiman to investigate day-care licensing scandal**

**LANSING** — Sen. Bill Hardiman, R-Kentwood, announced today that he will convene a hearing Jan. 17 to fully investigate the licensure of the Friends and Family Day Care facility and why a person accused of serious sexual crimes was able to obtain a day-care license.

“Like people across the Grand Rapids area, I was appalled to learn that a man charged with sexual assaults was still able to get a child-care license transferred to him and his wife,” Hardiman said. “The first obligation of our state regulators is to ensure that dangerous people are kept away from our children. It appears that there was a serious breakdown in that obligation. I intend to get to the bottom of what happened.”

State and federal confidentiality laws protect much of the information in child protection cases and investigations to preserve the anonymity of young victims. The Michigan Department of Human Services will be able to comment on state policies and procedures. The senator said that such a hearing would be a top priority of the Senate Families and Human Services Committee, which he chairs.

“The hearing will help me evaluate all the relevant information to determine whether our laws need to be amended or administrative changes are necessary,” Hardiman said.

Hardiman also noted that recent state legislation addressing the staff or owners of child-care facilities will take effect on Jan. 1 and should help.

“We passed several bills last summer—including Senate Bill 615, which I sponsored—to require background checks of persons who own or work at day-care and child-care facilities, and to require persons charged with certain offenses to report those charges to the state,” the senator said. “This reporting will help state regulators keep track of situations like Cross case, and to move quickly in revoking or suspending licenses when that is appropriate.”

The Department of Human Services will oversee the implementation of policies and regulations. Sen. Hardiman and the Legislature will review the state laws to ensure the right policies are in place.

“Our children and their parents deserve the assurance that their care facilities are safe havens from dangerous, predatory criminals,” Hardiman said. “I deeply regret the fear and unease the affected families and clients of this day-care facility must feel. I will act to help put those fears to rest whether that means new laws or better oversight of our care facilities.”

The Senate Families and Human Services Committee will meet on Tuesday, Jan. 17 at 3 p.m. in room 210 of the Farnum Building, 125 W. Allegan, Lansing, Michigan.

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